

Storm Water Management

Helena MS4

The City of Helena was issued a Municipal Separate Storm Water System (MS4) Individual Permit, NPDES Number ALS 0000012 on January 1, 2016 by the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). ADEM administers all major federal environmental laws, including the Clean Air, Clean Water and Safe Drinking Water Acts as well as federal solid and hazardous waste laws. The City of Helena NPDES (National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System) Permit requires the City to implement a Storm Water Management Program Plan (SWMP) that effectively reduces or prevents the discharges of pollutants into receiving waters. The City is required to prepare and submit an annual report each year to ADEM to ensure compliance with federal and state laws.

A Municipal Separate Water Storm Sewer System (MS4) does not solely refer to municipally owned storm sewer systems, but may include but not be limited to roads with drainage systems, municipal streets, catch basins, curbs, gutters, ditches, man-made channels, or storm drains.

Did you know the water that goes down the storm drain on your street flows directly into your local stream? Polluted rain water is the nation's number one water quality problem, and you can help! First, learn more about the problem. Storm water is rain from rain or melting snow that doesn't soak into the ground but runs off into waterways. It flows from rooftops, over paved areas and bare soil, and through sloped lawns while picking up a variety of contaminants along the way. Storm water that does not seep into the ground, drains into underground pipe systems on roadside ditches and may travel for many miles before being released into a lake, river, stream, or wetland area.

As it flows, storm water runoff collects and transports pollutants to surface waters. The amount of pollutants from a single residential, commercial, industrial, or construction site may seem unimportant but the combined concentrations of contaminants threaten our lakes, rivers, wetlands, and other water bodies. Pollution conveyed by storm water degrades the quality of drinking water; it also damages fisheries, habitats of plants and animals that depend on clean water for survival. Pollutants carried by storm water can also negatively affect recreational use of water bodies by making them unsafe for wading, swimming, boating and fishing.

Protecting the quality of our water resources is a responsibility we share. Here's how you can help:

- **Recycle used oil**
 Never dump used oil into a storm drain, sewer, or into the ground. The oil from just one oil change is enough to contaminate a million gallons of water. The Express Oil Change in Helena, located at 5046 Highway 17 (and any Birmingham Express Oil Change) accepts used automotive and marine fluids (Used motor oil, transmission fluid, antifreeze, gear oils, etc.) for recycling.
- **Properly dispose of household hazardous waste**
 Many common household products such as paint thinners, drain and oven cleaners, and pesticides are toxic. This type of waste can be disposed at: Shelby County hosts an annual household hazardous waste collection day at the Shelby County Landfill. See the Shelby County Landfill site at www.shelbyal.com/253/Landfill for notification of these dates.
- **Compost leaves and grass clippings**
 Composting is an excellent way to prevent leaves and grass clippings from reaching storm drains. Apply compost to lawn and gardens to decrease the amount of fertilizer needed and to increase moisture retention in the soil.
- **Use lawn and garden chemicals properly**
 Many chemicals are toxic. Follow label directions carefully for use of all lawn and garden chemicals, and apply sparingly. As an alternative, remove weeds in the lawn by hand rather than applying herbicide.
- **Plant trees, shrubs or ground covers**
 Trees, shrubs and ground covers increase the amount of water that soaks into the ground reducing storm water runoff. Erosion is a significant source of water pollution, so vegetation helps prevent storm water pollution as well.
- **Clean litter from streets and storm drains**
 Clean litter from streets and storm drains in front of your home to keep it out of streams, lakes, rivers, and other surface water.
- **Redirect down spouts from paved areas to vegetated or gravel filled areas**
 This increases the amount of storm water that soaks into the ground, reducing storm water runoff and erosion.

- Don't hose down driveways or sidewalks
Dry sweeping paved areas, along with careful trash disposal, are simple, effective pollution reducers.
- Wash your car on the lawn
Use the lawn, not your driveway! This reduces storm water pollution.
- Report sources of storm water pollution
Report suspected illegal dumping or soil erosion to the proper authorities.
- Keep your vehicle properly maintained
Repair leaks quickly. Clean up spilled fluids using an absorbent, do not hose into the street.

To report a problem with storm water, please come into Helena City Hall and fill out a storm water issue form.

Contact Information

City Hall

816 Highway 52 East

Helena, AL 35080

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Office Hours

Monday through Friday 8:00 am – 5:00 pm